Leavenworth or Maxwell in the staff level course. It isn't appropriate for the senior course, the War College."

You need to understand that at the Naval War College there was both the staff level course, the Leavenworth level, and the senior course, the Army War College level course. Both were there at the same location.

So, nevertheless, it was decided they would require a staff study. Then the faculty decided that rather than individual staff studies, they would make it part of the next group effort. Why they thought that provided a great teaching and learning experience for individuals I don't know, but anyway, it was required in the next task. Then in all the work groups the strawman staff study was put together by either Air Force, Army, or Marine students. The Navy folks would look it over and say, "Well, that really looks good." So much for Navy officers needing to experience putting together a staff study. [Laughter]

Q: Were there any other engineer officers when you were there?

A: No.

Military Personnel Center

Q: So, the next assignment, from 1972 to 1974, was as staff officer, Personnel Management Directorate, Military Personnel Center in Alexandria.

Did you find out about that assignment right at the end of your time at the Naval War College? Was it something you expected? How did that develop?

A: It was during the period when I was at the Naval War College, probably around the January time frame or so, that Lieutenant Colonel Bob Ayers, who was in the Engineer Branch of the Officer Personnel Directorate at the time, called me to see if I'd be interested in that position.

Chuck Fiala was in the position, the engineer colonels assignment officer, in the Colonels Division. It was really then still the Office of Personnel Operations and still located in the Tempo Building beside Fort McNair.

The Colonels Division basically had a single officer for each branch, with two for artillery and three for infantry because of size. Bob Ayers called to say this position was always selected with the concurrence of both the commander of the Office of Personnel Operations and also the Chief of Engineers.

I thought that it was a good position and said I'd like to do it—and so the nomination was made. I knew in February or March of that year that I would be going there.

Q: What were your duties in that position?

A: The assignment duties for anybody in officer assignments are much the same from the standpoint of being interested in career development, taking care of the person, putting the "P" in personnel, so to speak; managing requirements, fitting the right person to the right job, and making the whole personnel reassignment system work.

This also has to do with being able to build and have data and people's records at your fingertips, plus a lot of time on the telephone in dialoguing with people, plus doing your own analysis trying to figure out who the right person is for the right job.

Then there was the nonroutine, when something happened, and that happened a lot, where somebody might be relieved or somebody got ill or was in an accident or the things that cause a person to be curtailed, to go off to school or selection for a certain nominative job.

When any of those kinds of things come up—then you have to break the routine and go address that situation. Then there are ripple effects back on the rest of the system.

Now those duties are shared by everyone, whether assigning lieutenants, captains, majors, lieutenant colonels, or colonels. The farther you go up the ladder, the smaller the number of folks you manage. So, in the Colonels Division, very specifically, we were talking about 300 engineer colonels. I was their personnel manager, and that's a rather small sample compared to many others.

I was a lieutenant colonel at the time, so unlike many places where you have a major handling a major or a lieutenant colonel handling a major, here was a lieutenant colonel handling colonels.

That was done by design. The idea was that the colonel in the United States Army is a very important person, has risen up high in rank to where most folks finish their careers. The idea was that they wanted the colonels to be given a personal touch as far as addressing their personnel actions. Very definitely the Army did not want them to be treated like "part of the pack," as in "all lieutenants are going to have to do this."

At the end of 19, 20 to 30 years of service, first of all, there's not much more development that takes place. People all still do develop individually, but basically formal education development has been completed and it is now the period of maximum contribution.

There aren't many colonels, so most of them are in very responsible charge and by themselves, so they are the senior executives of the Army. By that token the system—the Army—wanted them to feel very personally taken care of by the system. So, all of the assignment officers, except for the Chief of the Colonels Division, were lieutenant colonels.

Our business was still really one of matching the right person to the job, but there was a lot more dialogue and a lot more interaction, almost like somebody who works at a headhunter agency, who is working for the firm and for the individual too, trying to make a match. You really have to convince both of them that it's the right kind of assignment.

So, there was a lot of interaction, a lot of telephone calls—typically every assignment would be 5, 6, 7, 8 telephone calls, calling around to find a person's interest; coming back with two or three "what do you think's?" Then moving on to say, "This is coming open, are you interested?" No, he's not, for whatever reasons. Then trying to find other matches.

At the same time, we had Army requirements. We still had Vietnam going on, and it was drawing down, so no one wanted to go for their second or third tour; some people still hadn't been there for a first tour.

There were some things where Army policy would be, "so and so should go next," so there were a few "have to's." The job of the Colonels Division assignment officer was to facilitate that process, make it work, and make everybody happy.

Another factor in all this was the fact that with colonels' very high level responsible charge, oftentimes I would only have one engineer colonel at a place. It's not like you would have eight or nine majors on a post and certain ones could gravitate to certain jobs and others slip to others, or you could cross over.

Typically, the colonel succeeded or didn't succeed in the position. There was no backstop there, no flexibility at the post, and everything was then a permanent change of station move to someplace else. So, that complicated things.

Also, colonels work for generals, and a lot of generals had very decided viewpoints on who ought to do what and where, what their colonels were worth and not worth, and who should be selected. They were always willing to provide a little extra help to the assignment officer.

So, that's what an assignment officer did, and the differences between, say, the Engineer Branch or Artillery Branch, and the Colonels Division.

Q: So, there were fewer Vietnam slots, but there still was a requirement for a number of colonels?

A: Yes. By that time, I think, we were down to three or four engineer colonels in Vietnam.

Q: Was there any feeling on the part of men who hadn't been there that this was something they needed to do, they needed to go ahead and have an assignment there? Or was it too late for that?

A: I don't believe by this time that people who hadn't been there felt that they had to go; those people who hadn't been there basically could have gone if they'd really understood and had asked. There may be some exceptions to that, and certainly some people who hadn't been there for some number of years could go back or not go back. By this point in time, we're talking 1972, we were definitely pulling back and down, so it was seen that the heyday of Vietnam service was over.

It was still a very important place. There were people advising the Vietnamese and still trying to make it a go. Certainly on a ramp down.

Q: Well, it was the sort of position that gave you a lot of high-level contacts throughout the Corps of Engineers, wasn't it, at the general level and with the colonels there at the time? A pretty delicate position for a lieutenant colonel.

A: It was a delicate position. A lot of folks really interacted, and some not so positively. Remember, that's with the Chief of Colonels Division there. I had a very good one, Colonel Lou Tixier (Too–shay, a French pronunciation), who was a grizzled old veteran. Most of his peers, his West Point classmates, were generals long ago, so he knew all of them on a first-name basis.

He was the decision maker. I made no final decisions on policy as to an assignment. I would send up my recommendations and he would put the final approval on them. So, when somebody really wanted to object, I could dialogue with the person, but ultimately it came back to Colonel Tixier.

I remember well dealing with Korea and the difference in hours and the nominative process, getting calls at home three nights in a row, just beating me up one side and down the other about someone's disagreement with the way things were going. So, dutifully, I would go in the next day and say, "Well, I had a call from colonel so and so last night"—this wasn't the person being assigned, this was a person representing the command—"and he was really irate and really worked me over. It's not getting any more pleasant. Here's the facts—and I still think my recommendation and your decision is the right way to go."

Lou Tixier would say, "Well, you tell so and so to quit climbing on your butt and tell him to call me next time. He talks to you no more." That was sort of the way we were. We would try to work it out, but sometimes things get to the point of not being able to be worked out. Then he was there, and he was of the vintage and the point in life where he could stand up and call it like it was and take it.

Meanwhile, those of us more junior were sitting there working with folks a grade up, trying to do the best we could to do it the right way. I thought the system worked pretty well. I mean, I'm calling everybody "Sir" when I'm talking to them and trying to work it out. I knew all these other communication links existed, and I knew also that a lot of folks would be communicating back to the Chief of Engineers. A lot of those went to the exec at the time, Colonel Ed Peel, or the deputy at the time, Major General Andy Rollins.

I got calls from the Chief's office. I would say, invariably, those calls—and I just want to make that clear now—invariably, those calls from either Ed Peel or Andy Rollins started with "So and so called about this situation. What's going on?" They were not calling and saying, "I want you to make this happen." So, it was put in the right context. Typically, I would explain what was happening and they'd say, "Well, it sounds right to me," or "You know, you really ought to consider so and so," and that would be some other factor that maybe I needed to throw into the equation as I worked it out. I thought the system worked pretty well from that aspect.

Q: Well, that leads in to an interesting topic, since I guess around 1962 was when the Chief of Engineers lost a lot of his input into the officer personnel selection procedures for Corps officers. It created a situation in which the Chief has a role in these personnel assignments, but they do come from another part of the Army. Could you talk some more about how that system worked and how the Office of the Chief of Engineers interacted with the Officer Personnel Directorate to make the critical assignments for the Corps, which are the district engineers?

A: During my time there, Lieutenant General Fred Clarke was Chief of Engineers, followed by Lieutenant General Gribble. The deputy was initially Major General Rollins, followed by Major General Dan Raymond. In all those instances, I had access to them because we're talking colonels and because they were interested. The Chief of Engineers has the responsibility for providing engineer support for the Army, and he was very interested in his executive-level assignments. With the exception of the selection of district engineers and commanders, I would guess it was basically up to me as to when I wanted to call to inquire, or when I wanted to make them aware of something.

If something came up with them, they could call me. Sometimes they went through their Chief of Military Personnel, Colonel Jim Bunch.

Back then, a military colonel was the Military Personnel Chief, separate from the Chief of Civilian Personnel, rather than later when it became a military lieutenant colonel position, and then later still a civilian position, now Ed Gibson.

We had quite a routine interaction with Colonel Bunch. We had up until this point a very rigorous screening process for district engineers, which I'll go into in a minute. For anybody within the Corps of Engineers family, then, I would deal with Jim Bunch as a natural business. If you take out district engineers and you take out everybody that was part of what is now USACE, that still left quite a number of folks. They might or might not be interested in the routine reassignment of the post engineer at Fort Campbell or the ROTC instructor or anyone else.

They were generally interested in where everybody was going, but it wasn't something I would call up to dialogue with them. Typically, the conversations weren't much. I never, for those others, floated a paper to the Office of the Chief of Engineers saying "please approve." So, it was all in terms of dialogue—are we getting it right; is it happening the right way?

Oftentimes, of course, there are so many people in the USACE part of it, they had to be released from USACE to go somewhere else. So, this caused a very natural dialogue with Colonel Jim Bunch and his folks. For example, "I'm thinking of so and so, who is right now the deputy division engineer at the Missouri River Division, to go out and be the post engineer at Fort Campbell. He normally finishes a tour there in December; I really need him in August. Could we get him early? I talked to the individual, and he wants the job."

Then Jim Bunch would be the one who would call the division engineer and say, "What do you think?"—and coordinate that sort of thing.

I also had other division engineers who would call me and say, "Sam, what are you thinking about for my new deputy?"

So, concerning your original point, there was a lot of interaction between me and the others. I'd get called by and talk to all engineer colonels and almost every engineer general in the Army, plus a whole bunch of others.

I said later on, and I told him this, that one person that I never did meet or dialogue with during that time was Joe Bratton. He, of course, later became Chief. He made brigadier the summer that I reported to the Colonels Division and left my "client" list. He was assigned to SHAPE [Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe], and was over there really out of the realm of dealing with me, so we never had any dealings. So, it was one important exception to that comment you made.

Q: It sounds like it's sort of brokerage; there's a lot of input and the people in the Colonels Division are the central point where this information comes together and gets massaged into decisions.

A: I think that's a good term; I think I was doing a lot of brokering. I was the person. It was, to start off with, almost frightening. Chuck Fiala, my predecessor, told me that in the first four or five weeks he would wake up in the middle of the night in cold sweats and wonder how he would ever get through the day. In fact, that happened to me. I would just wake up at three or four in the morning wondering how I was going to come up with the names of those three folks needed today to nominate to somebody.

Starting out I hadn't started an interaction with anyone. My knowledge base was only as good as my personnel roster, and I didn't yet really have a feel for it.

In my first week we had an engineer colonel who was kicked out of Vietnam for alcoholism. He'd only been there 10 days. So, we got a blistering back-channel from General [John E.] Murray in Vietnam to the Chief of Colonels Division, about three pages long, talking about how inept we were to submit a name like that—"please don't do any more and send over a real water walker immediately."

So, here I am wondering how am I going to get a real water walker, so we would at least have a name to send him in a couple of days, and one that we could break free and send over in two or three weeks. How was I ever going to do that? I mean, this was two or three days into the job.

Then, about the third day in the job, I was called down to General Gene Forrester's office—he was the Director of Officer Personnel. He said General Sid Berry, who was the commander of the Office of Personnel Operations at the time, was establishing a new thing called the Military Personnel Center [MILPERCEN] and we were going to move from the tempos to the Hoffman Buildings. We were going to reorganize into the new command the next Monday, and General Berry had selected Joe Jansen, the Engineer Branch chief, as his chief of staff. Would I hurry up and pick the right guy to be the next Engineer Branch chief.

Gene Forrester would like to have a name in two or three days. That's, again, in the first week.

Then General Rollins called me up and said, "Sam, we have this new thing, it was effective on the 1st of July." I had reported in on the 3rd; I believe he called on the 5th and said we have this new thing called the Officer Personnel Management System [OPMS]. "How about coming over in a couple of weeks and briefing the Chief of Engineers and tell him what it's all about and its impact on the Corps?"

We had just driven down from Newport, had a brand-new home we had just purchased, and we were trying to get the house set up for the kids in a new neighborhood and everything else. I mean, I was sort of overwhelmed with the expectations of folks for me. I was still trying to find my way down George Washington Parkway, across the 14th Street Bridge, to get to the tempo buildings and make things go.

Then it wasn't long thereafter that there was a lieutenant colonel standing in front of my desk saying he wanted the files of the best engineer colonels I had because General [William E.] DePuy was forming this new thing called TRADOC, splitting up the Continental Army Command into TRADOC and FORSCOM [Forces Command]. General DePuy was going to get the best officers in the Army to serve for him, and "I'm here as his stalking horse to find out who they are so I can recommend them. So, give me your best files. I'll be back in 20 minutes for them." So, the officer left, went down and accosted another assignment officer. I went over to Colonel Church Matthews, who was the ordnance colonels assignment officer, and I said, "Who was THAT? We give things away like that? Who is this guy?" Church said, "Well, that was Colonel Max Thurman. He's going to set up the new TRADOC and he's going to get them anyway, so you might as well identify who they are."

So, as I said, the job had a lot of things about it. I guess that's why, ever since, every time we had a new Colonels Division engineer assignment officer, I've tried to call them up the first week he was on the job and say, "Congratulations. You have a very important job, but it's difficult. Anytime you feel that you're in the cold sweats or you want to talk about anything, give me a call. I'm not in touch with the database any more, but if you would just like to pursue anything, just keep your cool and I'll be happy to help you out."

The assignment duties for anybody in officer assignments are much the same from the standpoint of being interested in career development, taking care of the person, but I remember well a call from General Carroll LeTellier. He called me my first week in the job. He was commanding the Engineer Command in Europe. Later, of course, parts of it became the 18th Brigade. He called up and said, "Sam, I'm commanding a big outfit and use a lot of your colonels in very important positions. Chuck Fiala always did a fair job by us, and I want you to know that we really need good people over here because we're in Europe, and they're all out by themselves doing important work. Just one thing: I'll always wait and take an underlap for the better man."

That was reassuring to hear because so many people call up and say, "I want your perfect man and I want him with a two-week overlap." When you're dealing with colonels, one

replacing one, it's hard to have overlaps. So, I always appreciated those comments by Carroll LeTellier. Thereafter, as I rotated into different positions I would try to convey that same thought to personnel assignment folks too. I was really interested in a quality kind of person that could do the job. If that meant waiting some period of time, let's talk because I was not insistent on the overlap but, rather, a tradeoff and a little time to get the quality.

Q: Well, along those lines, this is really the beginning of the time period at the end of the Vietnam War when the size of the Army went down, I believe, and the size of the officer Corps decreased, so that must have placed additional pressures on you to match the man with the job.

Was there a shortage of colonels? Were there more positions than colonels available, or did it stay pretty much in sync?

A: I think the colonel level stayed fairly well in sync; we didn't have a shortage of positions nor a shortage of colonels. It seemed to be fairly well in balance. We had the normal people leaving through the retirement system.

This was unlike in the company grades, where we were going through a reduction in force in that same time frame, especially year groups '66–'67. The branches were dealing with those reductions but we in Colonels Division weren't dealing with those. We still had turbulence, but the turbulence was starting to abate; we were trying to get back to leaving people in place longer. And, of course, everybody wanted to be left in place longer because we had had such turbulence.

Q: From looking at the other people working in the branch, did you have a different relationship with the Chief's office than—well, the Chief being one of the few branch chiefs left, that makes it a little different. Did you work differently than your infantry counterpart or your artillery counterpart?

A: Yes, I think so from that standpoint. Then there were other places, too, such as the intelligence assignment officer who was certainly tied to the Deputy Chief of Staff, Intelligence, and talked the same kind of way. It was different from infantry and armor and artillery, but it wasn't singular. Ordnance, transportation, and quartermaster assignment officers got help from the AMC community, the DCSLOG [Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics] and so forth.

Now I would say that has changed somewhat. Of course, I was at the other end of that scheme later with the advent of TRADOC and the school commandants being the proponent for their branch. So, now the branch school commandant is a person who plays in assignments quite considerably. Whereas when I was assigning engineer colonels, the school commandant was contacted for his own assignments, but we didn't interact for others.

Later I became the commandant and Engineer Branch "proponent." I then participated in the dialogue on which troop commands folks go to, and with the Chief of Engineers on district engineer assignments.

As commandant I took a proponency role in trying to work with the engineer colonels assignment officer as to what kind of needs there were and so forth. I often got calls from the assignment officer saying, "I'd like to check one out with you; what do you think of this one?" I think he was also calling the Chief of Engineers doing the same kind of thing.

Q: So, do you think, from your perspective, that was an advantage of having this input that, say, your infantry or artillery counterpart didn't have? Was he sort of—struggling in the dark is too strong—but operating without those sorts of contacts?

A: They always seemed to manage. I guess you always had a commander of the Officer Personnel Directorate who was infantry, armor, and artillery, so they got their help there. All the generals who wanted help were calling him, so they had a lot more interaction there.

Also it depended on the branch chief. Lou Tixier knew the Chiefs of Engineers. He knew them from having served with them; he respected them; and he said, "Sam, you've got a special relationship with the Chiefs of Engineers. I expect you to make that relationship work. You got any problems, call me, but don't feel reluctant to dialogue with them to make it work."

So, I really had his mandate—and really it all followed common sense. I mean, everybody—the Chief of Engineers, the Deputy Chief of Engineers, the Chief of Colonels Division, me, and the individual were all trying to make sure we got a round peg in a round hole and square pegs in square holes and did the right kind of thing.

Now certain people had views; they'd say, "Well, so and so doesn't seem right to me." I'd say, "How come?" They'd tell me how come, and then it would usually be obvious—it didn't seem right.

Before centralized command selection, it was different; of course, this is a little hearsay from me because I was at the end of that period. Oftentimes generals and colonels would want their favorite person to go command one of the top engineer troop units, even though he was not the best qualified person. So, our recommendation would go forward. The messages would come back saying, "How come him? So and so was certainly a better commander than the one you're nominating. I don't understand you guys; you just don't know what you're doing."

However, we had the personnel file, and it might show that same person he insisted upon having as his colonel commander was relieved from battalion command as a lieutenant colonel. It was a matter of principle—you don't reveal that stuff. So, we were saying, "No, he is not recommended for command and can't go in to command." Now later on, the centralized command selection basically took care of that problem, though a lot of people, of course, would say, "So and so is not selected. We don't understand it."

Over time, we basically have an understanding of how it goes. That was a phenomenon that occurred back early on, and one of the reasons why centralized command selection came about.

After the Vietnam War, with a reduced number of commands, it was felt that the Army ought to pick officers who were the best they had to command troops and not count on the old boy net to arrange whom our troops were going to be commanded by. The old boy net sometimes seemed to go on personal likes and dislikes, as opposed to what the record said. Not that the records were always 100 percent. When you got something as strong as officer efficiency reports that talked about a person's inability to command troops, you don't share efficiency reports with people, and thus you could have abuses like that. So, that was one great reason for centralized command selection.

Q: Were there some of your counterparts on the staff who didn't seem suited to this sort of job or didn't like it? It strikes me that this takes a particular type of individual for this sort of job. Is it something people would adapt to and work towards?

A: Well, everybody was pretty well hand picked; they were all recommended by somebody. Lou Tixier, however he did it, went out and checked everybody's pedigree, not just from a file, but how they interacted with people and the rest of it. So, I think that it was pretty well done.

I'm sure there were one or two who didn't like it so well. We had one who left after a year. I don't remember his ever really voicing dislike for what was going on, or maybe he just had another opportunity. I don't know. Basically, we were a pretty congenial group. We'd go down to lunch together and lament our various problems of the moment and question how we were ever going to come up with so and so, and that sort of thing.

One difference in duties was managing requirements. In Colonels Division we tracked colonel requirements, and we had three or four officers who had smaller branches, who would be the requirements person for TRADOC, for instance. TRADOC would say, "We need an officer." This officer would have the TRADOC books, and he would know how many they were authorized to fill, and he would say, "Yeah, that is a valid requirement; send it to me." It might be a branch-immaterial position, and he, the TRADOC guy, would send it to four or five assignment officers and say, "This seems suitable to anybody in a branch on an immaterial basis. Please provide me a person if you have a name."

We would fill it. Sometimes those queries would be from Tixier: "You must nominate a name." I would sit there and question, "Is this a good kind of position for an engineer to fill? Is it going to be enhancing for one of my people to do, or is it really not going to be enhancing and I'd really rather save the officer for another position?" Oftentimes we'd throw four or five names to the Chief of Assignments, who then would pick one to be the nominee for the division.

Q: Maybe this would be a good time to talk about the paper on colonels' assignments that you had during this period.

A: Well, OPMS was very new, as I mentioned. It became effective 1 July 1972. Now it had been approved, I don't even know when—probably the previous November or December. So, folks had been working on the principles and all the rest of it for some time. However, on

July 1st, I would guess a lot of people out in the Army didn't know a lot about OPMS, even though there had been *Army Times* articles and so forth.

Within the Corps of Engineers there had not been a lot of discussion about it. I know up at the Naval War College, there were only 26 of us in the Army there, and it had some very minor kind of exposure. It really hadn't crossed my mind when they said, "Hey, you know, OPMS started last week." I said, "Oh, what's it all about?"

As I mentioned earlier, I had this phone call from Major General Andy Rollins who said, "Sam, come brief the Chief of Engineers on this thing called OPMS and tell him what the impact is on his Corps of Engineers and his engineer officers, on his colonels."

So, I did a lot of research; I had to learn about OPMS. Out of that, I put together a briefing and I went up to brief General Fred Clarke. Andy Rollins was present and probably Ed Peel.

The essence of that briefing was that much of the rudiments of OPMS was in general terms, but the focus was on centralized command selection. That first year only troop commanders were being selected centrally by boards.

My recollection is that we had about twelve troop commands that engineer officers commanded, and about seven of them would rotate that year. So, the board was to meet and pick seven commanders to go to troop command the following July.

He asked what impacts were involved. One of the things I told him was that, first of all, I thought there was going to be a big change in engineer commanders. We had some good people commanding engineer troops in the Army, and we had an awful lot of district engineers who were all very good. You need to know that district engineers at this time were "slated." Maybe I better back up a moment and say that the process for selecting district engineers at that time was that the engineer assignment officer in Colonels Division would develop a slate of officers, recommending them to be district engineers, meeting the criteria of the Chief, year groups, and that sort of thing. We would take the twelve or thirteen districts becoming available and open that next summer, and then I would go over to sit down with the Chief of Engineers and typically his staff general officers present that day, and go through a "slating" session. At that slating session the Chief would then approve those who would be district engineers for the coming year.

The assignment officer would go back to the Colonels Division, write up the assignment sheet, send it in, and the Chief of Colonels Division, Lou Tixier, would approve the assignment.

In other words, we had a work group, face-to-face nominating process working. The assignment officer would take over that list, plus some alternates or potential substitutes. At that time we in the Officer Personnel Directorate worked with something called an order of merit list, a ranking by branch of how people stood.

The assignment officer would present, "Here's the Portland District, my recommendation is…" and give a resume of the person, show them a picture, and be able to answer any questions concerning the recommendation.

The Chief of Engineers would ask his assembled generals, "What do you think?" If it was an all civil works district, he'd ask the Director of Civil Works, "What do you think?" If it was a military construction and civil works district, he would get both of their comments.

It was really the Chief's "board of directors" giving him advice, and then typically he would say, "Well, I'd like so and so to go to the Portland District." That was the process.

When I went to my OPMS briefing for General Fred Clarke, I told him that I felt that one of the things that was going to change was that, whereas all of the previous secondary zone selections to colonels had gone to districts and none to troop command, they were now all going to go to troop command and would be unavailable to him as district engineers until later. The Army was saying our troops deserve the best; their new system was going to get the better commands because they were going to send the first cut of folks to troops and not districts.

My comment to the Chief of Engineers was that we had the potential for setting up two classes of citizens based on this situation.

Whereas the Army had some suspicion, especially coming out of the Vietnam War, as to the relative worthiness of district engineers, in the greater scheme of things, as opposed to warfighters and troops, we had a real potential of having that differentiation work to the detriment of the Corps of Engineers.

So, having said that to the Chief of Engineers, my recommendation to him was that he should consider very strongly the idea of putting his engineer districts into the centralized command selection system.

He asked that I brief the three new engineer brigadier general selectees. The selection board had just met, and I briefed two of them, Bill Read and Jim Kelly. I briefed them to get their viewpoints, and I think they generally went along, had some views, and conveyed their thoughts back to General Clarke.

Anyway, I was told by General Clarke that he'd like to proceed in that light—do what I needed to do to make it happen. So, I started really working on it then to try to flesh out the concept and come up with the ideas of how we wanted to do it. I floated a paper that made the recommendation to do it. The paper I'm just giving you now, the 30 March 1973 paper, is the culmination of that. [See Appendix A.] Colonel Paul Suplizio had a study group that was working on changes to OPMS; they were pretty well tied to what they already had going. By this time they were not really looking to make changes other than the ones they thought about themselves. Colonel Tixier was very supportive because we were emphasizing the Army's concept that we want key positions and we want to get the right people into them.

Our engineer point was that districts are really command. We want success in that very important position that happens to command more civilians than troops, so it's really not troop command, but it *is* command. So, we had a lot of dialogues and a lot of different people dialoguing.

Anyway, the 30 March memo was written just to set down thoughts as opposed to being the typical staff study. That gave me a little freedom in providing analysis and dialoguing and talking about it, but it did have advantages and disadvantages and so forth.

We started the coordinating process off, went on up the tape. Then I had to go back over and brief the Chief of Engineers and his assembled staff and general officers on kind of a "what do I want to buy in on?" discussion. Before that, General Clarke had *really* said, "Let's go in concept," but he hadn't said, "Let's do it."

So, I had to go back and brief. The last paragraph or last couple of paragraphs of the paper really put it into perspective. It said, "If board selection for engineer troop commanders is valid, it would appear that it'd be valid as well for district engineers." Whether you pick from a slate of candidates or by centralized board selection appears to rest on three issues.

First of all, could the Chief of Engineers live with his loss of flexibility? That is, you would have to buy in to the Army's peer groups and system; you couldn't have it all separate. The Corps would be part of it. The Chief of Engineers had had all kinds of flexibility, as I described before.

We also had a feeling that we liked a longer eligibility span and longer deferments. Would officers be able to be used in both positions? Could you be a troop commander and then a district engineer? How many years would that take them away from other things like key staff positions and the rest? So, that important issue depended on the question, "What were the rules?"

A second issue would be, are eligibility and selection criteria compatible in relation to available engineer colonels?

Third was the issue, would OPMS be adaptable to meet branch differences? Of course, that could be an arguing point. Everyone, we thought, who had the goal to do the right thing by the individual and the Army should be able to accommodate differences within the OPMS system.

So, my summary said a district is not a troop command, but it is a command. Elimination of commander "shopping lists" had been a driving force behind centralized troop command selection. It had not been such a severe problem in engineers as for other combat arms since we were spread thinly.

Consequently, the real drive was to provide board credibility in the selection process, and in that case the same argument would prompt me to believe it would be valid for district engineer selection.

So, my preference, my recommendation to the Chief of Colonels Division and the Chief of Engineers would be to see that the OPMS system show its adaptability by providing a board-selected list of commanders from which assignments would be made to both district and command positions.

I said, "Further, I would seek a four-year period for consideration [originally OPMS called for a two-year window], thus permitting greater stability in assignments and schools." Then I said, "I think the question of length of eligibility for selection needs to be answered first and then redirect the question to Chief of Engineers."

Anyway, we went through the process of briefing the Chief and the rest, and so General Clarke then addressed his request to the DCSPER [Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel] of the Army.

Anyway, Lieutenant General Sid Berry, former commander of MILPERCEN and now the DCSPER, did not concur. So, ultimately it went to General Abrams, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, for resolution with a recommendation from the Chief of Engineers to include centralized selection of district engineers within the Army's centralized command selection process, nonconcurred in by the DCSPER. There was a Chief of Staff's office showdown one day, to which I was not invited. Colonel Lou Tixier attended as Chief of Colonels Division. I pre-briefed him beforehand.

As a result of that meeting General Abrams approved command selection for district engineers over the objection of the DCSPER. Then he turned to Colonel Tixier and said, "What's your recommendation? Should a person be able to do both; that is, be selected for one one time and one another and serve sequentially, or should they be selected for one or the other?"

My recommendation at the time was to do only one, so that that person would have his command, other people would have the opportunity for command, and that person would be available to go to other important positions. Thus, he would not be out of the net as a commander two years, then three years—total time as a colonel five years and all in command. Who were going to be the guys filling all those other positions?

Lou Tixier then told me, "I didn't remember what you said, so I said, yeah, let them do both." So, as it first came down, a person could do both. That's the way it was for the first two or three cycles, and then later it was changed so that you would go to only one of the two. One colonel-level command per person was it. That's basically how it happened.

Q: Why was there opposition to this program?

A: Are you talking about Sid Berry's opposition? I never talked with him, so I'm just supposing, but generally it came from the standpoint of why is it that the engineers got to do something different? He might have thought, "We're trying to emphasize troop command and we got OPMS." Like so many things in the Army, it had been thought out in terms of the

infantryman, the artilleryman, the tanker—I mean, the people in those combat arms as opposed to all the other combat arms and the other services.

So, I think there was a resistance to see a break in the model they had created, thinking there would be further "erosion."

And, in fact, there was. AMC came in and wanted the project managers centrally selected—later approved; wanted the lab commanders centrally selected—later approved. Others came in, I believe in the intelligence arena, and wanted certain positions where not only military but a lot of civilians were involved centrally selected—later approved. In my viewpoint, those things were good for the Army.

With a list of 25 selected commanders when we needed 15 district engineers and 10 troop commanders, I could still work and prescribe a fit of a round peg in a round hole, square peg in a square hole, and sort the selectees by where their druthers were, where they best fit, and where their experience was.

Some people move very decidedly in one direction or another; others are in the middle, on the margin. So, there is some back and forth. If you look at what OPMS was touted to be—and that is, get the right person in the right job because the Army deserves that—we should let people specialize and we should get the right people to command troops and the right people in all those jobs. That is what we were just talking about, sticking the right people in the jobs.

Now we would have a system for all branches to do what was best. For the engineers, we'd have a system whereby a board would meet, and that board would recommend the best 25 officers to go to command that year from their review of the records. It was no longer the old boy network and no longer just assigning an officer how he views his opportunities. Now we're talking about a board independent of those influences that recommends the top 25.

Then when Colonels Division goes to assign them, there is still the ability to work the system and the officer's druthers, using the Chief of Engineers' slating system to determine which one is the right one to go to which position. So, it seemed like we were better off.

Your question was, why did people oppose it. I think it is because they were thinking simplistically of a narrow model that had been derived, and they didn't want to have exceptions to it.

Q: So, those other people weren't really involved in originally developing this? The ones that now were objecting to it?

A: I don't know. See, the Suplizio work group were lieutenant colonels and majors, at my level, which were always engaged in dialogue as to what's right or not. Yet, they were pressured to put together their briefing charts and go brief directors of the Officer Personnel Directorate and the Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel. I'd never been assigned to the Pentagon at that time, so how that worked was a mystery.

I remember a couple of things from the dialogues. I was in a meeting before the Abrams meeting with Lieutenant Generals Sid Berry and Fred Clarke. Berry had not opposed it yet, but he was listening as Fred Clarke was trying to bring him about. I remember one of his questions. Sid Berry's question was, "Well, Fred, aren't you really looking for something special in your district engineers?" Well, I could see it was kind of a loaded question: If you want something special, then you're not talking about "my" centralized selection, you don't want to buy in to the rules. You want something different, so you go run your own system to handle that.

"You know," General Berry said, "something like professional registration or certain special or technical kinds of capabilities." Well, we engineers had professed we wanted professional registration in the Corps among our engineers. It had always been a desired thing, not a "have to" thing.

So, Fred Clarke's answer was very direct and really fine. It was, "You know, Sid, I really want the same thing that you say the Army wants when it selects its commanders. The most important thing to me for selecting a district engineer would be success in the previous level of command. I want somebody who succeeded as a battalion commander, who shows he can take resources and face problems and tight timelines and stress and work through people, work it all together and make it turn out and produce a quality product." He continued, "That's the same thing you're telling a troop command selection board. So, no, I don't want anything special; I'd be very satisfied when your board sits down and picks the best guy, and I can live with that best guy."

"As far as professional registration, I'd still like it. I think we're still going to encourage our folks to get it. We'll be ahead of the game when almost all of those folks have professional registration. To say that's a 'have to' or the final kicker, no; the thing I really want is knowing we've got the best people going to the command."

Even after that, Sid Berry nonconcurred, but I think that was probably a telling argument when General Clarke went up to see General Abrams.

Q: That's an interesting path for a program to follow, personnel programs nonconcurred by DCSPER, but approved by the Chief of Staff.

A: Well, General Abrams had a real, down-to-earth knack for solving things that way; that is, if there is an issue, work it to the end and then bring everybody in and everybody give it their best shot, and then he'd decide. So, he did it.

Q: So, would one way of looking at this be that in order to prevent a two-tiered system that might not be favorable to the district engineers, the Chief was willing to give up a little of the input that he had under the old system in selecting district engineers. Is that one way of looking at it? You give a little and you get a little?

A: Well, I think I saw it that way when I first started off. Seeing how things were working, I think you'd have to ask him. I believe General Clarke would have said that he recognized

that he was going to have this list given to him of folks who had been sorted out, and he really wasn't going to have to give up much at all because he was going to have identified for him the right people. After that, he still had the ability to put a person that was seen as broadly capable with experience, say with troops and military construction and civil works, all three, in a district like Savannah, one of our very large districts. Or if he had another person who had served in the district with civil works only and really had shown a knack for dealing with outsiders, then he could put him in a civil works only district. Or a person who had spent all his time with troops could be put in a troop command.

I think he felt that he really wasn't giving up anything, and would have this new opportunity, and there would certainly not be any two-tiered system of haves and have-nots from the standpoint of how the Army was going to look at them. Promotion boards and the way people look at things are Army run, and so it's important to be in the Army system from that standpoint.

I think he felt maybe, as I had, that perhaps district engineers would not compete for general officer as well on future boards if the Army saw only troop commands being anointed by the centralized command selection process. The Army system was to select the best. Therefore, if you hadn't been to troop command, you weren't going to be, by the Army definition, part of the "best."

The first year of my two years in the job, engineer troop commands were centrally selected, and then I slated district engineers for the districts just like had been done previously. My second year then was the first year that we had a centralized selected slate, and that year then I took a slate over to the Chief of Engineers. It recommended for his district engineers only people who had been picked by the centralized command selection board.

There was one minor point of flexibility the Chief lost. As I mentioned before, if there were twelve districts, we would take over twelve slatees and three or four alternates. He had total flexibility to leave somebody off and put in an alternate. Under the OPMS system, the Army system, when you were identified as a command selectee, you would go. A new alternate would not come in until all selectees were in position.

Now the way the system worked was the board selected a number larger than the positions available. Then it wasn't very difficult to figure out how we did the rest. They would come and ask me how many engineer troop positions were to be open in the coming year, and I would say seven. They took their list of twelve names and then drew a line after seven, and published those seven names as the selectees. The remaining five all became alternates.

So, that was the drawing of the line. The announcement in the *Army Times* to the Army was only selectees, those people above the line that we knew there were commands opening for. Thus, the Chief of Engineers could not get down to alternates until all the command selectees were done.

That second year we went over just like the year before. I stood at the end of the table with General Gribble now on the right, and all of his general officers who were there that day, three or four, sitting at the table, and we went through the slating process.

Like before, I'd say "Portland District is coming open this year, and I recommend so and so." The only difference was, the only ones I had on my slate for all districts were those who had been selected by the command selection board rather than selected by me.

That selection board that first year had five members. We had two engineers on that board. Following the board, we went through the same slating process. Colonel Tixier, the Chief of Colonels Division, went with me that year, sat there and watched the process and never said a word. We went through the whole thing, and there was a lot of discussion. In the end General Gribble said, "Well, I'll buy the list as presented." So, we didn't change a thing from the basic recommendation we went in with.

I did not take the troop commanders over to propose those as a slate because the troop commanders worked for the CINCUSAREUR, and other commands. So, I did not slate those to the Chief of Engineers. I had met with General Gribble and basically brought him up to date on what we were doing and who we were going to nominate to those other places, so he'd have a feel for it and an opportunity to input.

That particular year, as I mentioned, an officer was selected and designated for troop command or for district. Because they decided you could do both, they had to have two selection lists. You could not appear on both, but having been on one, later you could be selected for the other.

So, there were two discrete lists, which meant there was no movement from one to the other. The thing I described before is a condition now, where there is one list and there is the ability to put people in the right spot.

That first year, if the people on the board decided an officer should go to troop command, then he received a troop command. If they decided an officer was to go to be a district engineer, then he had to go to be a district engineer.

When the day came that the lists were announced to the Army, there was the list of command selectees. The same day that list was announced, it went to the commanders, like the CINCUSAREUR, with the names of which officer was nominated for which command in Germany. There were only three engineer commands there at that time, but many more infantry, armor, artillery, and others.

So, CINCUSAREUR had a slate, and he had the ability to say, "No, I really want this one up in Bamberg and this one back in Babenhousen because both are artillery commands. I got family problems here, and to my knowledge this fellow might be better doing the community bit." So, CINCUSAREUR had the ability to do that kind of shift around. At the same time, the Chief of Engineers had his slating session to line his commanders in the right place.

I have one more thing to mention. It really ties to something that becomes very emotional each year, and that was brigadier general selection because when the lists are announced, everybody has their analysis of why everybody was selected or not selected.

While I was in the Colonels Division, I watched that process. A lot of people called me up and lamented their own nonselection or wondered why so and so had been selected. So, there were many opportunities for dialogue along this line. I remember this particular year that we had a lot of engineers selected—five.

I remember at least two calls afterwards; one of them said, "Well, enough of this OPMS selection business. Obviously you have to be a troop commander to be selected for brigadier general."

Then another called up and said, "Obviously you have to be a district engineer to get selected."

It turned out that that year the selectees included a couple of district engineers, a few who had been troop commanders, and Ernie Peixotto, who had done neither but commanded an engineer lab, the Waterways Experiment Station, which was not then centralized command selected.

So, much for everyone's reading of the tea leaves.

Q: You didn't become involved in the brigadier general selection except to get this feedback from the colonels you had contact with?

A: No. Our drill each year was to go through the files before we sent them to the board to make sure that they were straight. We all knew those that we felt were very strong candidates and we knew who the top fifteen or twenty were—who could end up being a top four or five. We would do our own analysis of the files that were to compete.

We would look at their picture and make our own analysis of whether that picture represented what that individual thought he would be seen as.

We'd call him up and say, "You really don't want to go in with a picture like that. You really ought to get your picture retaken." So, this was the same kind of thing that the Engineer Branch does at all levels.

We basically just tried to make sure the file was correct before it went to the board.

Then, once we got the names of those selected, we'd dash out and read the file and copy whatever we needed out of it—because it was gone immediately to the General Office Management office. So, any residual analysis we wanted to do, we had to do it quickly.

Q: Did that include any attempt to make the files better another time, based on the outcome from the file?

A: We were always advising people of improvement things. It was a good feeling because people were interesting. Oftentimes their discussion was whether to retire or not or to stay competitive, or where they were competitive, to stay or not—so we were always in that kind of a dialogue with people. Even though we knew those fifteen or twenty people that were competitive, we'd want to go back and look at the selectee's file and say, "Why was it the board selected this person rather than another one?"—for purposes of understanding.

We really couldn't make the files better, other than, as I mentioned before, correcting a mistake that was obvious or didn't come out right or that sort of thing. A person had to make his own file better by his performance, and that was in the officer efficiency reports.

Q: Were there ever any studies done of that information in the Army that you know? I know there have been historical studies done. In fact, it's interesting to look at the careers of general officers, World War II commanders—but at the time nothing formal was done. The people in the branch had this information in the field, but nothing formal in terms of studying the characteristics of men promoted?

A: I don't know of any formal kind of thing. We were all convinced—with the things that I heard before—that number one is that performance counts. The officer establishes his mark by performance.

Second was the job—what job you're in. There are no "have to's," but I think General Morris put it right after he'd served on a brigadier general board. He said, "The thing we were all looking for was how many times did the person have an opportunity to fail, but he didn't?" as reflecting that a person had tough jobs. A lot of people might have good performance records, but in jobs that were seen to be more mundane or routine, and hadn't had the tough jobs where a person was really putting his ability on the line, and had had multiple opportunities to fail in doing that, but carried the day and brought things about so there was success.

That's why I think command has always been such an important factor. Some people say, "Well, you've got to be a commander." Well, I don't know that you've got to be a commander. Nevertheless, command positions, for the most part, are seen as an assignment where a person has multiple opportunities to fail. If the record as written up in performance reports shows that it was a tough job and he performed well and did these kinds of things, then it would stand out.

Subsequent to all this, I sat on a brigadier general selection board and on a colonel selection board—and I think "selection" comes out of a file. By "file" I mean not an individual officer efficiency report, but when you read ten or twelve or twenty, there will be a common pattern there of strength, of taking tough jobs, of doing things always at a notch above base expectations—or not.

So, when people start to score out files, it almost comes off the page at you. When you do a bunch of them, you can see certainly who definitely should not make it and who definitely should make it.

The tough part comes when you start working the margin just above and just below the "cut" line. How difficult that is, comparing a couple of different people, because now you're really in the middle of it.

I believe the Army system is such that we make each individual make his/her own record. That is, their personnel file really does have a word picture of them. The system works pretty well—especially when you take a board that has twenty-five different people looking at individuals' files and doing all that kind of scoring. The other thing I found was there was pretty darn good unanimity in the way things were.

I mean, it's not that one board member puts a person in the top group, and another puts him in the bottom group. They'll all put him in the top group or maybe one will have him at the bottom of the top group and the other one will have him at the top of the middle group.

When a board member looks at a file, he starts having that image of the baseline. Even though we come from the engineers, infantry, military intelligence, ordnance—we sit down in a group thinking of the common good of the Army and start scoring records. It comes out and it works out.

Q: Was battalion commander seen as one of those tough jobs that was important?

A: Yes. Of course, the time frame that I'm talking about, '72–'74, was right after the Vietnam War period, so that was definitely seen as one of those kinds of tough jobs. A command anywhere—I mean, there was a recognition that command in Europe might have been tougher than command in Vietnam because the resources had been reduced so. We had battalion commanders in Europe with one major, maybe, and one captain, most of the folks being lieutenants commanding companies.

That's what I had when I commanded Vietnam, too; I had two majors, but at one time I had five lieutenants. That was when you made captain in two years.

I mean, that growing Army had had a lot of that, but certainly the resources were toward me in Vietnam and not toward Europe. I had my own things to deal with in command in Vietnam, particular problems and folks shooting. The person in Europe was sitting there, too, with people who had come out of the Vietnam culture, some of them with the problems they brought with them, and then went back into a disciplined arena and really fought that.

So, the folks commanding in Europe were without the money to keep the troops out training, keeping everybody occupied. Some of them would have bad habits such as alcohol and drugs and were not worried about a mundane training day. Always working on a surge basis, the commanders in Europe had to deal with some very difficult problems.

I think the system recognized that command in Europe was tough. The Army does have a way of looking at what went on, and over all those years, so many people had been to Vietnam that that had to be a very significant point—commanding at battalion level for purposes of selection to colonel, or commanding at colonel level for purposes of selection to brigadier general.

Q: Was there a sense, and this is going a little bit beyond the assignment, but your comments made me think about it—was there a sense at the beginning or did that sense grow, of which engineer commands, engineer districts, were tough jobs or tougher jobs than some others? Or did the board depend on the engineer generals there to give them that input? Were some engineer districts more controversial, with harder jobs perhaps than others were?

A: You're talking about brigadier general selection.

Q: Yes, that's going a little beyond there.

A: I think perennially that has been a question and perennially one that people have dialogued and discussed. Often the engineer board member has been asked to explain just what is a district.

I sat as a member of a brigadier general board. As we met together, as a full board, before we broke down into three panels, they asked me to comment on districts, just as the board president asked people to comment on project managers, depot commanders, and others. Even during the board, people would come up to me and say, "Now that I read the files, I'm starting to see this. What really is a district, anyway? It really looks like a tough job."

You know, when we engineers wrote a job description, we really wanted to make sure we threw in all the stakes a person had, worry about the fact that they had this watershed or that watershed—I mean, that's pretty tough for a board person to decipher in the short amount of time that he had to look at a file.

So, it was an important discussion point. That's why we changed the title to district commanders as opposed to district engineers, to make sure that the command was plain to everyone. That's why there has been a continued emphasis to describe the command in short terms that really make the point.

Everybody in the Army knows what infantry brigade command is, and everybody knows what division artillery command is because everybody's been stationed where there is a division that has all these components.

On a board many don't know about an engineer brigade because we haven't got many of those. So, you might have to explain that too. You talk about engineer command, district engineer command, and what that really means. Being able to describe it in terms of being responsible for people, being responsible for duress, stress, large contract amounts, and those important characteristics is essential for the engineer board member.

I think an engineer on a board does have to explain that. The board I was on, having had that discussion, selected five engineers. A couple were selected who had been district engineers—not a question and the troop commander selectees—not a question.

I think it fell between the strength of their overall reports. The district engineer was seen throughout his jobs, and he had served in other important jobs, as having had a lot of tough jobs. One of them, his command job, was with a district. He was seen as a person who really

had it all together, certainly general officer capability, and he stood very high. The other district engineer selectee was not a matter of differentiation between type of command so much as his file was strong.

I think General [John W.] Vessey is the one who said, talking to a bunch of new brigadiers at their charm school session, "You know, if we were flying you out to Fort Sill this afternoon and the plane went down, we'd just take the next 50 on the list, and they would do just as well as you will."

My session on the board would validate that. We only got to pick 50. There was another 50 and then some who were certainly qualified and capable.

Q: Any other questions we need to cover in the '72–'74 assignment?

A: I can't think of anything.

Q: Who succeeded you?

A: Tom Sands, and he was followed by Mark Sisinyak.

Q: When you mentioned General Fiala, I was struck by the fact that we had people in that position who were all generals later, right? I guess it was an important assignment.

A: It was and is. Now, there has been a change since then. Not in the quality of people, but it used to be that the person selected was right out of the War College.

Q: Okay.

A: At some point thereafter it changed so that the person selected was just finishing battalion command but not yet going to the War College. I don't remember when that point was.

Typically, the colonels assignment officer, when finished, went off to a district after that assignment. Chuck Fiala left and went on to Louisville District. Because he was now past War College, he would be selected for colonel while in Colonels Division, then left to go off to command an engineer district.

I broke the scheme because, having convinced the Chief of Engineers to have centralized command selection, when I was ready to leave I was not yet a colonel and could not be considered for centralized command selection. So, I didn't, as an irony, get to follow my predecessors, based on my own recommendation.

One other irony of that is, and I had no insight but just note it as an irony, that, as I mentioned to you, I had recommended a person only go to one command. Yet, General Abrams' decision was to let them do both sequentially. Thus, I watched all my friends and peers, Hank Hatch, Ken Withers, John Wall, Scott Smith, and others, go do both, one after another. I went off to command the 7th Engineer Brigade, later, with the potential opportunity of being selected for district engineer as a following assignment. The policy

switched during my brigade command, so then I didn't get the opportunity to go two back to back.

Of course my recommendation had been not to let people do that, so the irony being that the system had worked for a number of years, and about the time when I might have the good fortune of doing both, the system changed. So, I got the opportunity to go to Heidelberg for a year to work as a staff engineer, and then come back to the Pentagon in the Office of the Assistant Chief of Engineers for a year instead.

In the end, if anything made the difference between my selection for brigadier later on, which happened just after I arrived in the Deputy ACE's [Assistant Chief of Engineers] job, it was probably the fact that I did not go off to a second command job but went instead to Heidelberg. There I worked on some very tough issues that were visible Armywide. So, I would suppose that when the board looked at my file, they saw that I had had those tough jobs I had mentioned, not only command, but also in Heidelberg doing a tough job. Well, the irony might be that I didn't get the opportunity to do two in a row, but from the standpoint of potential for selection, it probably worked out better for me.

Office of the Chief of Staff of the Army

Q: Your next assignment in '74–'75 was assistant to the Director of the Army Staff, Office of the Chief of Staff of the Army. What did that position involve, and how did you get to that position?

A: Well, that was an interesting period. The bottom line of all this was that I was completing two years as an assignment officer, and you get a certain burnout feeling when you're doing the same things over again. I had changed, or helped change, the system, and that was exciting, but I wasn't going to go off and be a district engineer in the next assignment like Chuck Fiala and all my predecessors had done. So, I felt it was time to seek a change in responsibility here in town while I was here. It was time for something new.

You know, when you're in the Army, you maybe get addicted to change. That is, you enjoy the new challenge every couple of years or so in a new position. Maybe you don't always enjoy the physical move, but you get a sense when you've sort of maxed out in your professional development in a particular area, your juices aren't as charged as they were before, and you really need to seek something different. So, that's about where I was as we ended that time. Nobody else had ever been there more than a couple of years—that was about the right tour—and I knew there was a board meeting and I was in the primary zone for colonel and thought I would be selected.

So, if I stayed in MILPERCEN another year I'd be doing the same kind of things over again, so I ought to seek to do something in the Office of the Chief of Engineers or in the Pentagon.